DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 767 FL 017 557

AUTHOR Kharma, N. N.; Hajjaj, Ali H.
TITLE Towards a Pragmatic Approach to FLT.
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (22nd, Edinburgh, Scotland, April 11-14, 1988).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Communicative Competence (Languages); Educational Change; *Educational Objectives; *Educational Strategies; *English (Second Language); Language Styles; *Second Language Instruction; Standard Spoken Usage; Vocabulary Development

ABSTRACT

A discussion of the worldwide problem of how to approach second language instruction examines insights gained from research and theory and recommends adoption of a pragmatic approach. Five principles underlying language instruction must be considered in this pragmatic approach. First, the most essential function of language is its communicative-humanistic function. Second, language form and function should be presented simultaneously, be guided by communicative grammar, and progressively change in favor of functions until function is predominant in the advanced stages of language learning. Third, no classroom practice or activity leading to the learning of a particular form or function should be prohibited or avoided. Fourth, vocabulary development should be considered essential in any syllabus or teaching situation. Fifth, attention should be paid, particularly at the advanced levels, to language styles used by native speakers in different social situations. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED298767

TOWARDS A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO FLT

N. N. KHARMA AND ALI H. HAJJAJ

Paper presented at the 22nd International Conference of IATEFL/TESOL
11-14 April 1988
University of Edinburgh, Scotland

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N. Kharma

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL 017 557

TOWARDS A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO FLT.

N.N. KHARMA & ALI H. HAJJAJ

1.0 Introduction

Over the last three decades or so, foreign language teaching (FLT), particularly Teaching English as a Foreign or a Second Language (TEFL) or (TESL)[1] has witnessed some major changes. These changes first emanated from dissatisfaction with traditional approaches based on teaching grammar and translation, and later on came as a result of advances in psychology and lingusitics, and more recently, in socio-lingusitics. The changes and their impact on foreign/second language teaching are now well-documented (see for example: Kelly (1969), Roulet (1975), Roberts (1982), Yalden (1983), Swan (1985) and in the context of the Arab World: Kharma (1967) and (1972), Hajjaj (1985) and (1986), Kharma and Hajjaj (1988) and Kharma and Hajjaj (Forthcoming, (1988)).

However, in spite of such a long period of theorization, experimentation and application of various approaches, the issue has remained as unresolved as ever, namely, how best, or perhaps how appropriately, can the teaching and learning of a foreign language be tackled? In this paper an attempt will be made to offer a possible solution of the problem.

Firstly, the main trends and controversies in the field of FLT, as seen today, will be summarized. Secondly, the most important insights gained from research and theorization worldwide, as well as the lessons learnt from our own

experience will be discussed in slightly more detail. Thirdly, and finally, a suggestion will be made for the adoption of a pragmatic approach which the writers of this paper feel may be most appropriate, not only in the Arab World, but also in many other similar situations elsewhere.

2.0 FLT: An On-Going Controversy

In the context of foreign language learning and teaching, three main issues should be discussed, namely: the aims of foreign language learning and teaching; the state of human knowledge on the nature of language, language learning, and language teaching, and finally, guided by those aims and that knowledge, how the process of learning and teaching foreign language takes place.

2.1 Aims

Learning (or acquiring) another language (beside one's own) is not simply a lingustic excercise; rather, it constitutes learning a new way of life, and going beyond one's own culture. One must, therefore, have good reasons to enter into this enterprise. Although some may argue (e.g. Kelly, 1969) that learning a second language may have litgerary/artistic, philosophical as well as social and practical aims, most people nowadays argue that the last aim is the most important (cf. Roberts, 1982).

2.2 The Nature of Language, Language Learning and Language Teaching.

2.2.1 The Nature of Language

Innumerabel attempts have been made to define, describe, and even explain (cf. Chomsky 1957 & 1965) language behavior. We will here make only very quick reference to those approaches to the study of language that have had their impact on language learning and teaching, i.e. the traditional, the structural and the transformational-generative approach.

The oldest of these is the Traditonal Approach in which the description of language was very closely modeled on Latin, was based on written language, particularly literature, and took no notice of the language of daily life. In spite of its great defficiencies, this approach lasted for centuries. Only in modern times did it receive strong criticism, although this has often been carried too far until it lost sight of some the appproach's great virtues. (Scott et al 1970:216).

The second surge in the attempt to identify the nature of language and to analyze its system was the emergence of the Structural Approach. This approach was guided by scholarly contribution of different disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, history, dialectology and traditional

grammar (See for example the works of H. Sweet (1988), F.de Saussure (1916), L.Bloomfield 91933), C.Fries (1952), J. Firth (1957) and R. Lado (1957), among others).

The structural approach does not constitute one single model; rather, it is a compendium of various approaches (e.g. Halliday's Systemic Grammar (1964), Pike's Tagmemic Grammar (1960), Well's Immediate Constituent Grammar (1947) etc.).

Guided by some explicit theory, the structural approach describes the spoken language of individuals and communities as it stands at the current moment. It limits itself to language form and excludes meaning from its sphere of study, thus digging its grave with its own hands.

Linguists of the third approach, the generative transformational approach, however, tried to find the grammar of the underlying system of language (i.e. competence) rather than of actual speech (i.e. performance); they made distinction between surface and deep structures of the sentence; they even attemped to find out more general rules (i.e. universal grammar) of all languages, (Liles 1971:7).

It is well known now that this approach has been a powerful new tool for vigorous research into the nature of

language and related disciplines. In its recent developments, as in the areas of phonology and semantics, it provides novel and more systematic information than ever before. However, lingusts have started to depart from concern with issues related to sentences in isolation and are becoming more concerned with the relationship between from and use of language, with discourse analysis, text lingustics and pragmatics; (see, for instance, Coulthard, 1977; de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981; Leech, 1983, and Brown 1984).

2.2.2. **Language Learning**

"Parallel Polarizaion" is a term used by H. Douglas Brown (1980:9) to refer to some striking similarities between lingustic and psychological research in the philosophies and approaches of the two disciplines. While the traditional approach to the study of language enjoyed no such parallelism to any psychological/learning theory, the structural approach to language description soon gave way to the generative approach. Similarly, the behaviourist approach to language learning was superseded by increasing attention to cognitive psychology.

The central issue in the behaviourist approach (Skinner, 1957) is the observable or overt behaviour and the factors that influence this behaviour. As far as language learning is concerned, effective behaviour means the production of

correct utterances in response to stimuli. If an utterance is positively reinforced, it becomes habitual. This reinforcement comes through repetition, or imitation. Verbal behaviour that is not reinforced is weakened and may be extinguished. The emphasis in this approach lies on the role played by the environment on the child who is said to be born with a tabula rasa and has to learn everything from the outside world around him, (V n Els, 1984:26).

According to this theory, the explanation of the whole language learning process is done in a superficial, mechanical manner, excluding the most important aspects of language, i.e. meaning. No wonder, therefore, that this theory was to give way to a more profound one, termed the cognitive or mentalistic theory.

The cognitive or mentalistic approach, which was initiated by Chomsky's now famous review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour (Chomsky, 1959), looks at human behaviour as far more complex than animal behaviour and consequently, "a description of language behaviour has to be primarly a description of the innate ability of human beings to learn a language", (Van Els 1984:27). This drastic change of approach to the study of language learning was also strongly influenced and enhanced by the emergence of Chomsky's Generative Transformational Grammar, and this led to a great

number of experiments into the language learning process that the child goes through. In brief, the new approach stressed "the mental activities of the language learner himself, and strongly question(ed) the relevance of such external factors as imitation, frequency of stimulus, and reinforcement", (ibid: 28).

Finally, in this section we turn to what is known as the procedural approach. "This approach, while maintaining a mentalistic outlook, exhibits a renewed interest in the structure and function of children's lingustic input, and has caused a shift in the discussion, away from innate versus learned lingustic ability, and towards the children's cognitive capacity to discover structure in the language around them and to put these discoveries to use," (ibid:26). The most important tenet of this approach is that "both internal and external factors play a role in the development of language...," (ibid: 31).

More recently, however, discourse/text analysis and research into the socioloingustic dimension of language acquisition and language learning have provided us with a wealth of information about the influence of society on language learning; (for an excellent summary, see Klein 1986). Although these studies do not constitute a fully-fledged theory of language learning, they draw our attention

to this sociolingustic aspect which we have to bear in mind when considering the various psycholingustic theories of language learning. This aspect has also proved to be of special importance recently as far as foreign language teaching methodologies are concerned.

2.2.3 Language Teaching

Teaching is the process by means of which learning is expected to take place. "Teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling learners to learn, setting the conditions for learning, (Brown, 1980:8).

3.0 Approaches to F.L.T.

"... teaching necessarily begins with a teacher's understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught. It proceeds through a series of activities during which the students are provided with specific instruction and opportunities for learning, though the learning itself ultimately remains the responsibility of the student" (Shulman, 1987:). The issue Shulman raises for teaching and learning generally sums up much of the development, and indeed the controversies that have been going on in ELT circles for a long time. A quick glance at recent ELT history would show that, at times, ELT methodology focussed on the role of the teacher as a conveyor of language as a finished product or a complete system of structures; at other times, it focussed on the learner as an acquirer of

language as a developing process. Sometimes, it is conscious learning of the language forms or even functions, with the teacher playing an instrumental role; at other times, it is the subconscious acquisition that receives most attention.

We will have to assume that we are all familiar with the major approaches that have dominated the stage at one time or another during the present century, namely, the grammar - translation, the direct, the audio-lingual (Fries 1945 & Lado 1964), the audio-visual, the natural approach (Krashen 1982 & 1982; Krashen & Terrel 1983), the communicative (see Hymes 1972, Austin 1962, Searle 1969, and Firth, 1957 for theory; and Wilkins 1972 & 1978, Widdowson 1978, Candlin 1971, Breen & Candlin 1980, Brumfit 1980, Morrow 1981, Littlewood 1986, Hajjaj 1985 & 1986, etc. for application), and the humanistic approaches experimented with in the United States such as the Silent Way (Gattengo 1972), Community Language Learning (Curran 1976) and Suggestopedia (Lozanov, 1979), and we shall not say much about them here. We wish only to refer to a comprehensive survey article by Roberts (1982) and two critical articles by Swan (1985) which cover the whole field and can be consulted, if necessary. We will then proceed to state what we believe are the most valuable insights and lessons we have learnt

from this long tradition of research and experimentation in languge, language learning and language teaching.

4. Insights Gained & Lessons Learnt

4.1 Insight Gained

Let us first sum up what we think are the most important insights gained from previous research, theorization and experimentation. The first insight is that we can learn a foreign language both naturally (or unconsciously), in a non-formal school setting, the way a child learns its mother tongue, and formally (or consciously) in a formal situation such as the school environment. Karshen's monitor theory, emphasizing learning through natural acquisition only has not been, and we doubt if it will ever be, validated, (Krashen 1982, a & b). Moreover, it is being empirically proved everyday that a great deal of foreign language learning takes place within the environment of the school, or similar institution, even when the most traditional teaching methods are employed.

The second insight is that learning to communicate in a language involves much more than learning its formal system: phonological, morphological, syntactic and even semantic. Until recently linguists, psychologists etc. used to focus on the study and the teaching and learning of the structure of the language concerned. More recent studies, however,

have shifted our attention to another aspect of language, namely its social use to fulfil certain functions and to communicate appropriately with other human beings. In other words, we are now dealing not with Chomsky's linguistic competence (i.e. knowledge of the linguistic systems), but with Hymes' communicative competence, which subsumes the former and adds to it the social-cultural rules of communication.

The third insight we have learnt is that learning a foreign language requires positive attitude and personal involvement on the part of the learners. In other words, foreign language learning is influenced by affective factors. "Each learner brings into the classroom an extremely complex array of attitudes, motivations and feelings. What takes place in the classroom is influenced by - and, in turn, exerts an influence on - a whole range of these so-called 'affective factors'" (Littlewood, 1986:23)

4.2 Lessons Learnt

In the first instance, we have learnt that we cannot, and should not, from now on, swing our pendulum from one extreme to the other, as has been the case so far, not only in our own case, but also worldwide. The fact is that "while (other) sciences have advanced by approximation in which each new stage results from an improvement, not rejection, of what has gone before, language-teaching methods

have followed the pendulum of fashion from one extreme to the other", (Mackey, 1965: 138), and we have during the last two or three decades, unfortunately, been carried away by enthusiasm to every new change in fashion. One of the reasons for this swing of the pendulum has been the sudden change in the source disciplines particularly lingustics and psychology. We fully agree with Politzer (1972:5) that "ELT should not be the child of fashion of any new development in the source disciplines. New insights in the source disciplines should not automatically lead to different foreign language teaching procedures". A corollary of this lesson that we have also learnt is that we should not look down on everything that smacks of tradition and exalts everything that smells of innovation. Let us give a glaring example. During the heyday of behaviorism and descriptive structuralism, the study of meaning in lingustics, even the inclusion of a semantic element in the process of language analysis, was taboo. One reason for such attitude was that in the so-called traditional grammar meaning was employed as one of the criteria for such analysis. However, only less than two decades later, meaning propped up again and assumed a central role in lingustic analysis at the hands of the T.G. grammarians. A great number of other examples can be cited to prove the point, namely, that we should not reject anything simply because it is old or traditional.

Another important lesson we have also learnt is that, before designing any foreign language course for any of our communities, we should carry out our own research particularly in the area of the NEED for the foreign language. Sadly enough, we have contributed little in this field either to our own situation or to the international community. Without full awareness of what a specific community needs in terms of which foreign language (English, French, etc.) what brand (colloquial, literary, scientific, technical, etc.) of the foreign language, what level and for what purpose the community, or even each large sector of that community, needs the foreign language, it is useless even to start thinking of setting a foreign language course and bear the huge cost involved in implementing it. The fact that a great deal of research on various aspects of FLT has been carried out in developed countries, particularly the U.S.A. and West Europe, should not discourage us from conducting our own research. On the contrary, because the situations there are often quite different from our own as far as FLT is concerned in terms of the questions raised above, there is more reason to carry out our own research. The kind of outside research that might be more useful to us should be the type that is carried out in less developed countries such as East Europe, India, the Far East, Africa, South American, etc. since there is more similarity between

the conditions prevailing in those countries and our own. But again the differences deserve special study on our part.

Of particular significance to us also is the lesson we have learnt that what has been recommended for adults in terms of F.L. teaching and learning should be treated very critically when children are concerned. We don't have to elaborate this point; the difference in age carries with it so many physical, cognitive and affective factors that have to be taken into consideration.

Another lesson has to do with culture. So far, and for various reasons that need not be mentioned here, it has been assumed that language and culture are inseparable. Nowadays, we do not take that for granted. Although language is certainly the most important component of culture, we believe that, as far as English is concerned, it has ceased to be only either British or American. There are now more than half a dozen "Englishes" used around the world either as native language or as a lingua franca. Consequently, English has to a great extent been deculturized, and can be taught to any group of people with any cultural background in such a way as to arouse no conflict between the two cultures concerned.

A final lesson that we have learnt is to distinguish between English as a foreign and English as a second

language. In the former case, there is usually one fullyfledged native language, which serves all the purposes of the community. In such case, the need for learning a foreign language such as English, arises from instrumental - rather than integrative - motivation, and the purpose is usually educational or pragmatic; (cf. Gardner and Lambert, 1972). On the other hand, in the latter case, the new language learnt is either required by a bilingual community, as it is the case in Canada for instance, or is the lingua franca, as it is the case, for instance, in India, the Phillipines and Nigeria, owing to the multiplicity of native languages in the country. The difference between the two cases, often ignored or confused, is of paramount importance particularly with respect to the attitude towards the foreign language (and probably its speakers too) and the motivation to learn it. These are two basic factors in foreign language learning and teaching and should be borne in mind whenever a foreign language course is being planned and designed.

5.0 Clearing the Ground

Now that we have set the stage, what are we going to perform on it? let us prepare for our performance by dispelling one or two possible misconceptions.

In the first instance, although we are going to suggest

a new approach for foreign language teaching, we should make it very clear, right from the outset, that the element of novelty will not lie in the components of such approach (e.g. grammatical or functional dimensions, techniques, educational media, etc.), be they major or minor components; each of these components has most probably been tried out sometime somewhere (cf. Mackey 1965 and Kelly 1969). Novelty wll be seen more in the overall picture which emerges out of the way the various components are organized and inter-related.

The other complementary remark is that we are not going to reject whole methods simply because they have become old, or because any of them has not worked out as one integrated package. This does not, however, mean that we are going to be eclectic in the sense that we choose bits and pieces from here and there and come up with a new approach[2]. We are going to suggest a pragmatic approach, one that should be applicable and flexible, and in the final analysis, down to earth. But it will also be an approach firmly based on strong theoretical foundations as will soon become clear.

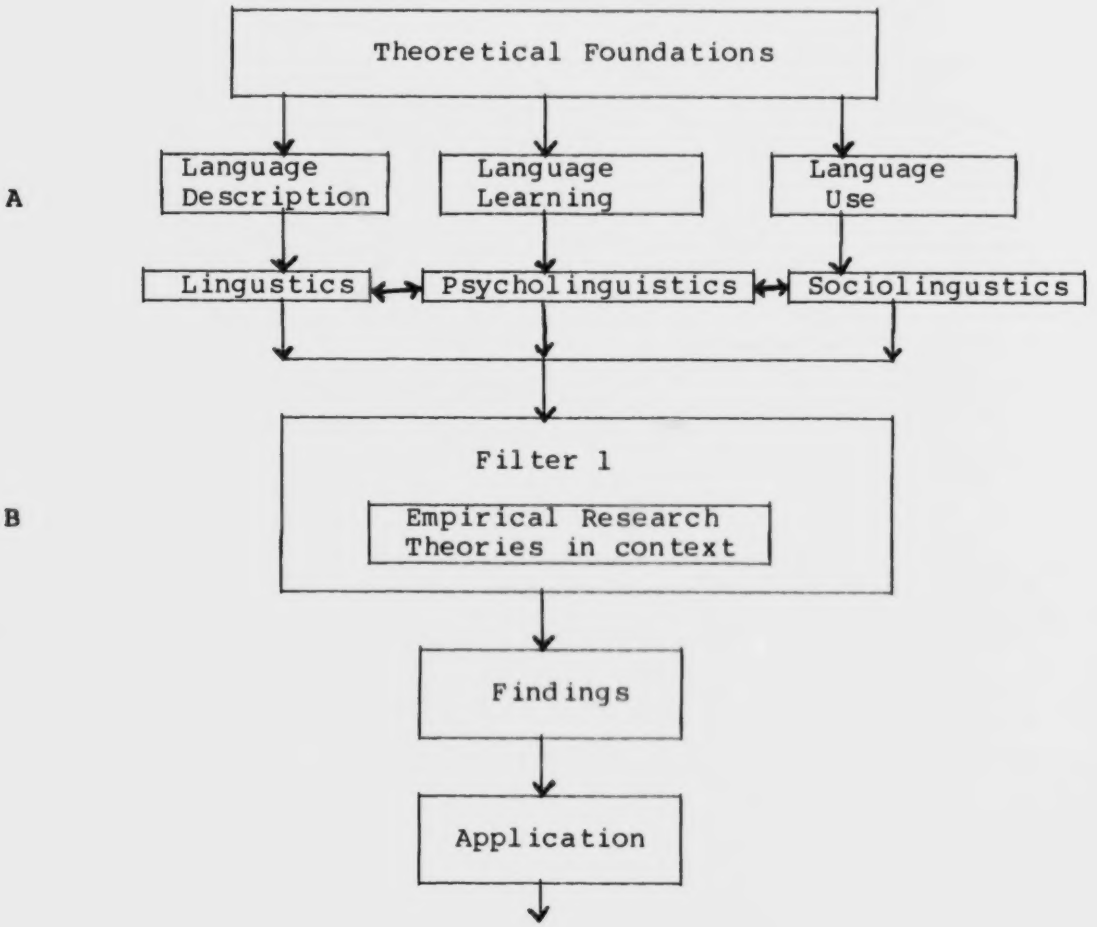
Finally, we will use the term approach in the sense suggested by Anthony (1963: 63-67) to cover the whole language learning/teaching operation, in both its theoretical and applied aspects.

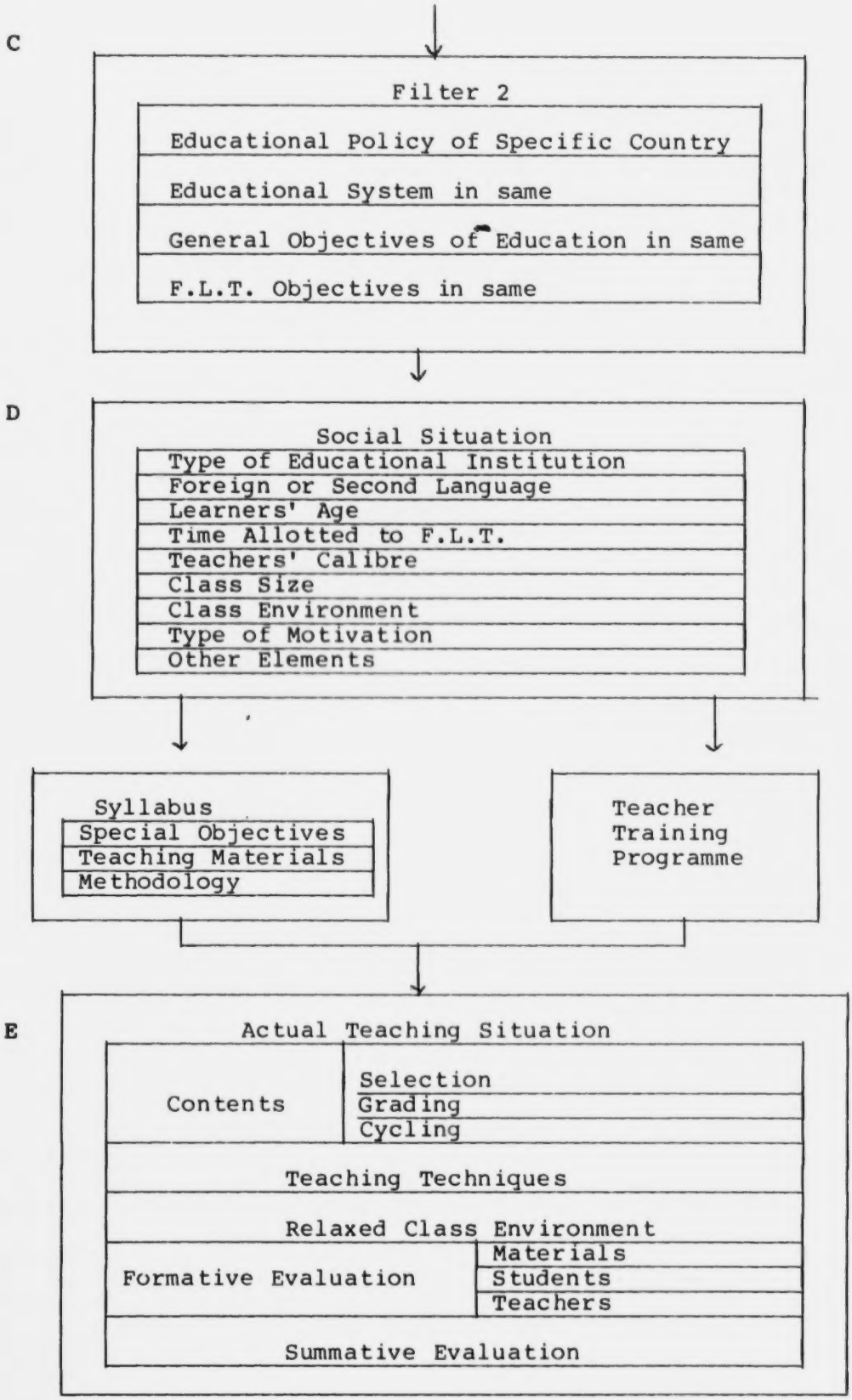
5.1 The Suggested Approach

Let us now proceed to present the suggested approach which we would like to term the Pragmatic Approach in the sense explained in the previous section.

The following diagram, called a framework, may better be considered as a flowchart which shows all the important components of a F.L. learning-teaching situation, as well as all the important foundations that it should be based on.

A Pragmatic Approach to F.L.T.
A Framework




C
Filter 2
Educational Policy of Specific Country
Educational System in same
General Objectives of Education in same
F.L.T. Objectives in same
D
Social Situation
Type of Educational Institution
Foreign or Second Language
Learners' Age
Time Allotted to F.L.T.
Teachers' Calibre
Class Size
Class Environment
Type of Motivation
Other Elements
Syllabus
Special Objectives
Teaching Materials
Methodology
Teacher Training Programme
E
Actual Teaching Situation
Contents
Selection
Grading
Cycling
Teaching Techniques
Relaxed Class Environment
Formative Evaluation
Materials
Students
Teachers
Summative Evaluation

Beginning with "A" we find the major theoretical foundations that should underline any F.L.L. & T. plan. Stern (1983: 44) adds two other foundations here: educational theory, and history of language teaching. We have included the former under C (filter 2) because we believe this is its appropriate place since it does vary, sometimes, considerably, from one country/situation to another. The reason for Stern's addition of the latter component is the belief held by many (e.g. Mackey 1965, Stern 1983, Van Els 1984) that "ignorance about what has been done, said and thought in the past (has been) one of the causes of the fad-like changes in F.L.T." (Van Els 1984:143).

These theoretical foundations, and in particular whatever research is carried out in any of the disciplines constituting them should then pass through stage B (i.e. filter No.1). In this stage the research carried out should be empirical in nature, and should be applied to a special situation, i.e. the situation in which the educational plan is to be designed and implemented. This research should cover the content, i.e. language itself, as well as both the language learning and language teaching processes which are going to take place in that particular context of situation. Whatever stands the empirical test of this level would be considered by the planners and policy makers to be appropriate and applicable in that situation and would serve their own purposes.

Before attempting to apply the outcome of this research in the special situation, we believe it should first go through another essential filter (No.2) which constitutes not only general educational theory but also the educational philosophy acceptable to the authorities of the country. Without accomodating the educational philosophy and policy of any country, it is difficult for any research finding to see the light of application. The rest of the chart is almost common knowledge to anybody involved in F.L.T.; only the organization is different. We believe that the special situation, with all the elements that constitute it, is an indispensable factor in determining the syllabus and in designing plans for actual teaching situations. The elements mentioned under the special situation are not comprehensive; they are examples of how many and how varied such elements can be.

Moreover, one of the most essential corollaries of any syllabus should be a very well-planned and an on-going programme of teacher-training since the implementation of such a syllabus depends to a very great extent on the teacher. It has very often been taken for granted that once a <u>good</u> syllabus has been designed by the (often central) authorities, the teacher will, with some orientation or short-term training, be able to handle it. The consequences have often been disastrous.

So far we do not seem to have added very much that sounds like innovation. Let us, then, leave out our discussions of details and go back to basic principles. How are we going to make use of the insights and lessons learnt so far?

As was mentioned at the outset of this paper, we do not believe in fads in F.L.T. We rather believe that knowledge about anything is cumulative, but that, in order, to make good use of it, it should be examined very carefully with the aim of discarding what proved to be valueless or impractical and keeping what is left. In F.L.T. we believe that in the present state of affairs worldwide as well as locally the following principles should form the basis and foundation of our thinking and planning.

The first principle has to do with language itself and what we should consider as its most important function. Thus, although some language functions may differ from one situation/community to another, it seems that this point has already been resolved at the world level. Whatever other functions language is supposed to serve, its communicative-humanistic function is considered world-wide as the most essential, owing to the tremendous amount and degree of development in the last few decades in transport, communication and mass media. Consequently, we can here take the stand that the F.L. should be taught in order to serve

this purpose in particular prior to any other purposes that a specific situation might require.

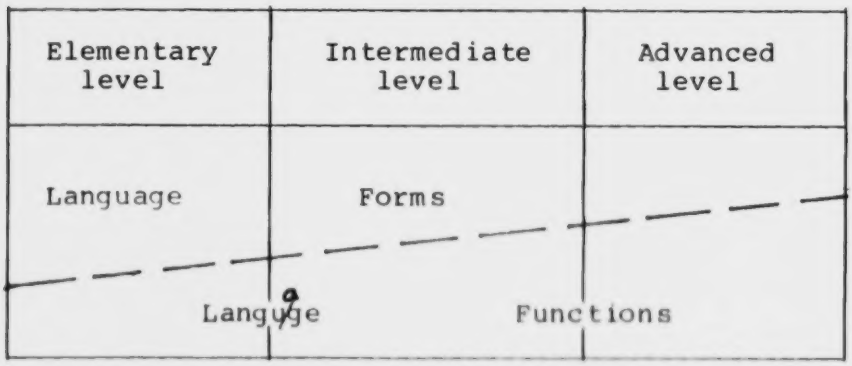
The second principle is related to the issue of the two basic dimensions of language, i.e. the formal and the functional. This issue has to be resolved right at the outset, because it has, in our opinion, been the main source of difference in methodological outlooks between the various schools that we have mentioned earlier above. In order to be able to arrive at a satisfactory solution to this problem we would better break it up into its two aspects.

The first aspect has to do with the appropriate proportion of each of the two dimensions which has to be presented to the learner of the FL in order to enable him to use the language accurately, fluently and appropriately in the various social situations. The logical solution seems to be to strike a balance between the two dimensions. But this does not mean that half the syllabus should be formal, the other half functional. It simply means that this ratio should be decided on the basis of the age, experience, needs and level of each group of learners. Having said this, we still seem to be confronted, as others have been, with an irritating question in this area, namely: Should we postpone the presentation of the functional dimension of language until the learners have had some command of the formal aspect, particularly if we are dealing with children

in a school situation? This question has arisen recently because of the great difference between teaching the native language at school (where the emphasis is usually on the formal aspect), and teaching the foreign language. In the former case, most of the basic functions of the native language will have already been learnt before school, and what the child does at school is to be introduced to the written form of his language. The latter case is, of course, quite different since the foreign language is going to be learnt from scratch, and both the formal and the functional dimensions are new to the child. But is this really the case? Firstly, it must be remembered that a great number of lingustic functions are universal and the child does not actually start learning the FL with a tabula rasa in this respect. Of course there are differences in some of the ways employed by various languages to express the same functions, but the great number of similarities should not be ignored; in fact they should be fully exploited. Secondly, as far as the formal dimensions of the FL are concerened, we are aware of the fact that languages may be similar or different in various lingustic aspects, usually depending on how closely any two languages are related, or how widely they are separated. This is an area which has received a great deal of attention and study (3) and we feel we need not say more about it here.

Going back to the a.m. question, namely, whether we should postpone the presentation of language functions until the learners have acquired some knowledge of the formal aspects of language, we would like to say the following. it is not only possible, but very strongly recommended, that form and function should be presented at one and the same time. This is feasible if we start with the simple functions, i.e. where the form directly expresses the function, thus exploiting the learner's knowledge of such simple functions in his native language. But since there are certain, so-to-speak, primitive formal aspects, such as pronunciation and some other morphological and syntactic features which seem at this stage to be basic for later learning, it is only natural that we should be teaching more forms than functions at the earlier stages. Let us exemplify. We can, for instance, start with those functions that are immediately related to the "content" or "situation" chosen to be focused on, e.g. introducing self: (I am Ali; I am a pupil; I am 10 years old, etc.) or where we live: (we live in a flat/village, big house it is small or big; There are two bedrooms, a living room, a garden etc.). In this presentation, at this early stage of the course some, and only some, attention is paid to the above functions but most attention is given to grammar/structures in terms of practice, drilling, etc. (see Techniques below).

But it is also natural that this ratio between structures and functions should progressively change in favor of functions until these become predominant at the advanced stage. Yalden (1983: 122) has summed this up in a drawing that is reproduced here (figure 2).



The other aspect of this second point, i.e. formal and functional dimensions of language, is a very thorny one. If we could agree on the ratios of the two dimensions in the FL syllabus and teaching materials, could we also agree on a solution to what we consider as the most important and difficult issue in FLT, namely: the selection, grading and sequencing of language items, and how to integrate the forms and the functions of the languge in the FL programme? Such a programme based mainly on language structure, i.e. form, has been tried out, but with limited success (cf. the audio-lingual method of FLT above). Almost the same fate was met by the other programme based solely on language functions (cf. the communicative approach to FL above). Consequently,

there is no way out of the present situation but to look for a method which should combine the two language dimensions. In this respect we can be guided by what is now called communicative grammar (cf. Leech and Svartvik, 1975) which is based on language functions. Thus we can, for instance, start in the early stages by focusing on those lingustic forms where both form and function coincide; then proceed gradually to present more forms and functions relevant to the various situations, all the time employing the technique of recycling to introduce other (or expand into other uses of) functions at later stages, and so on. The most sophisticated relationships between form and function should naturally be left until an advanced stage. All language functions, however, have to be presented in situations which are genuine or at least well-simulated. Needless to say that progession, i.e. grading and sequencing, should take the learners' ages and level of maturation and conceptualization into consideration. The topics on which lingustic units are based should, therefore, be of the type that could appeal to, and consequently, arouse the interest of the specific group of the FL learners at every stage.

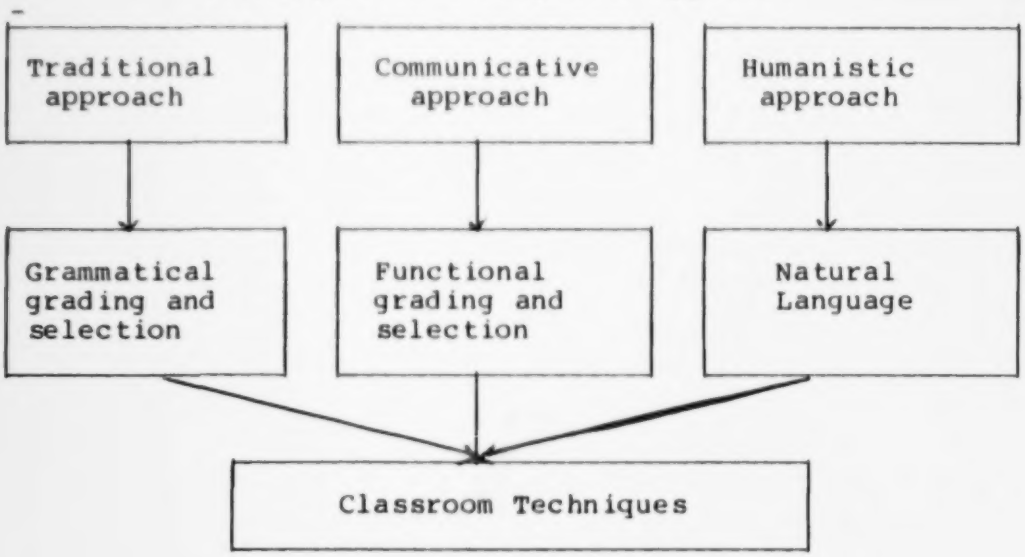
The third principle which has to be taken into account is realted to the techniques employed by the teachers in their classrooms. We have seen very specific techniques devised and strongly recommended by proponents of one FLT

method or another during the present century. All other possible techniques were usually excluded in favour of those recommended. We have observed grammatical analysis and parsing as well as translation employed by advocates of what we now call the traditional or grammar-translation method. Teachers were later advised by audio-lingusts to discard those old techniques and to exclusively adopt the new techniques of minimal-pair drill and pattern practice, as well as memorization and reporduction of dialogues, etc. Only a few years later, and often up till the present, such techniques were considered taboo and only groupwork, role-playing, games and other so-called communicative activities were recommended. We believe that this has not been the attitude conducive to good teaching and learning. Teachers have perhaps been wise enough not to adhere closely to such advice, but often to depend on their own experience, or even intuition, as to what best suits a given situation and employ whatever technique they found appropriate for teaching a certain lingusitc aspect. We would also take this attitude that the teachers have already adopted. We believe that no practice or activity that leads to the learning of a particular linguistic form or function should be prohibited by the material-writer or the syllabus planners, or avoided by the teachers. Keeping in mind that the final aim of FLL should be for the learners to acquire the

ability to communicate in that language, we believe that we need various types of activities to help the learner reach that aim. Some of those may be totally formal or structural, others may be wholly communicative, whereas a third type - probably the predominant type should combine both dimensions of the FL. In other words, once we have decided to adopt an approach to grading, selecting and sequencing EFL teaching-learning content based on language uses most appropriate to the learner at a given stage (guided by his/her needs, age, level of maturation and conceptualization), any teaching technique (brought from any previous methodology) becomes legitimate as long as it is appropriate. We can represent this diagramatically in figure 3 below (cf. Hajjaj, 1986):

Figure 3

Techniques in a Pragmatic Approach



A fourth principle has to do with vocabulary. There has been a great obession with the structure of language during this century, particularly the second half of it. This has been due to the various linguistic schools that concentrated on that aspect, and has, naturally, been strongly reflected both in the research and the practice of F.L learning and teaching. Almost all so-called modern methodologies recommended the use of the bare minimum numbers of vocabulary until the whole of the internal structure has been mastered. In our opinion, this has been a mistake. We are all aware of the fact that a great deal of communication can be carried out with content or lexical vocabulary but without very much grammar (cf. witness childrens' early "telegraphic" language). Now, with the recent, justifiable concern with the use of language, it is high time we reviewed our situation and included vocabulary as an essential part of any syllabus and teaching situation.(4)

Finally, since we have agreed that the ultimate objective of foreign language teaching and learning should basically and essentially be the ability to communicate - probably particularly with native speakers of the FL - we should, at a later stage, pay special attention to the different styles used by those native speakers in different social situations. This can and should, of course, be started early in the course, but should be intensified at the advanced level.

In conclusion, it is our belief that the general framework drawn in the last part of this paper togetgher with the principles just stated would be of very great help both for the policy makers and those who are responsible for implementing that policy. Such a framework and principles would not only improve the state of affairs, but would also make ELT realistic and more enjoyable both for teachers and students. It would also hopefully make it more fruitful.

NOTES

1. Although TESL should differ widely from TEFL in both theory and teaching methodology, the two terms are often used indiscriminately, particularly in the U.S.A. We will be using the former term consistently in this paper since it is a much more accurate description of the situations we are dealing with.

2. See also Girard (1986) for an interesting discussion of "the electric way."

3. James (1980) and Fisiak (1981) are two good surveys of such studies.

4. Dave, Willis, co-author of COBUILD English Course, Book 1 (1988), Book 2 (1988) and Book 3 (Forthcoming), Collins, U.K., argues on the basis of a computer-based research study of English that "the 700 most frequent words of English make

up around 70 percent of all English text, of all the language we produce and receive. The commonest 1500 words capture 76 percent of text and if we add another 1000 words to bring our total to 2500 we will capture 80 percent of all spoken and written English" (Willis, 1988).

•

REFERENCES

* Austin, J.L. (1962). How to Do Things with Words. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

* Anthony, E.M. (1963). "Approach, Method and Technique." English Language Teaching, 17:63-67.

* Bloomfield, L. (1933). Language . N.Y. : Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, and (1935) London: Allen & Unwin.

* Breen, M.P. and Candlin, C.N. (1980). The Essentials of Communicative Curriculum Language Teaching. Applied Lingustics, Vol.1, No.2: 90-112.

* Brown, H. Douglas (1980). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

* Brumfit, C. (1980). Teaching ELF - Where are we now? Practical English Teacher, Vol.1, No.1.

* Candlin, C.N. (1971). Sociolingustics and Communicative Language Teaching. Paper given at the 7th IATEFL Conference, London.

* Chomsky, Noam (1957). Syntactic Structures, (Ninth Printing, 1971) The Hague: Mouton.

* Chomsky, Noam (1959). Review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior, 1957. Language, 35: 26-58.

* Chomsky, Noam (1965). Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. Cambridge; Mass. : MIT Press.

* Coulthard, Malcolm (1977). An introduction to Discourse Analysis. London: Longman.

* Curran, C.A. (1976). Counseling-Learning in Second Languages. Apple River, III.: Apple River Press.

* de Beaugrande, R. and Dressler, W. (1981). Introduction to Text Linguistics. London: Longman.

* Fisiak, Jacek (ed) (1981). Contrastive Lingustics and the Language Teacher. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

* Firth, J.R. (1957). Papers in Lingustics: 1934-1957. London: Oxford University Press.

* Fries, C.C. (1945). Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

* Fries, C.C. (1952). The Structure of English. N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Co.

* Gardner, R. and Lambert, W. (1972). Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning. Rowley, Mass: New bury House.

* Gattengo, C. (1972). Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: the Silent Way. N.Y. : Educational Solutions.

* Girard, Denis (1986). The Eclectic Way. English Teaching Forum, XXIV, 3: 11-14.

* Hajjaj, A. (1985). Approaches to English as a Foreign Language and their Implications for English Language Teaching in Kuwait. The Arab Journal for the Humanities, Vol.5, No.20: 292-321.

* Hajjaj, A. (1986). A Short History of Methods in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. In Pat W. Paterson (General Ed.): ESP In Practice. Washington, D.C.: USIA.

* Halliday, M.A.K. et al (1964). The Lingustic Sciences and Language Teaching. London: Longman.

* Hymes, D.N. (1972). On Communicative Competence, in J.B. Pride and Janet Homes (eds.) Sociolingustics. London: Penguin: 269-293.

* James, Carl (1980). Contrastive Analysis. London: Longman.

* Kharma, N. (1967). The Teaching of English in Kuwait. ELT, 3: 253-260.

* Kharma, N. (1972). Children and the Language Lab. An Experiment in Kuwait. ELT, XXVI, 2:136-145.

* Kharma, N. and Hajjaj, A. (1988). Teaching Enlgish to Arab Students. London: Longman.

* Kharma, N. and Hajjaj, A. (1988). Learning and Teaching Foreign languages. Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (in Arabic).

* Kelly, L.G. (1969). Twenty-five Centuries of Language Teaching. Rowley, Mass. : Newbury House.

* Klein, Wolfgang (1986 a.). Second Language Acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Krashen, S.D. and Terrel, T.D. (1983). The Natural Approach. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

* Lado, R. (1957). Lingustics Across Cultures. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

* Lado, R. (1964). Language Teaching - A Scientific Approach. N.Y. : McGraw Hill.

* Leech, G. and Svartvik, J. (1975). A Communicative Grammar of English. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

* Leech, Geoffrey, N. (1983). Principles of Pragmatics. London: Longman.

* Liles, B.L. (1971). An Introductory Trnsformational Grammar. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

* Littlewood, W. (1986). Innovation and Tradition in Methodology. In Longman Tradition and Innovation in English Language Teaching: 20-39.

* Lozanov, G. (1979). Suggestology and Outline of Suggestiopedy. N.Y.: Gordon and Breach, Science Publishers.

* Mackey, W. (1965). Language Teaching Analysis. London: Longman.

* Meys, W.J. (1973). The Commuinicative Teaching of English: A Skeptic Remark. B.A.A.L. Seminar paper University of Lancaster.

* Morrow, K. (1981). Principles of Communicative Methodology, in Johnson and Morrow (ed.) Communication in the Classroom. London: Longman, pp. 59-66.

* Pike, K.L. (1967). Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of Human Behavior. 2nd revised ed. The Hague: Mouton.

* Politzer, R. (1972). Lingustics and Applied Linguistics: Aims and Methods. Philadelphia: Centre of Curriculum Development.

* Rivers, W. (1964). The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

* Rivers, W. (1964). Teaching Foreign Language Skills. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

* Roberts, J.T. (1982). Recent Developments in ELT; Part I, Language Teaching. 15/2: 94-109 and Part II, 15/3: 174-193.

* Roulet, Eddy (1975). Lingustic Theory, Lingustic Description and Language Teaching. London: Longman.

* Saville-Troike, M. (1982). The Ethnography of Communication. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

* Saussure, F. de. (1916). Course de Linguistique Generale. Paris: Payot. Trans. W.Baskin: Course in General Lingustics (1959). N.Y. : Philosphical Library.

* Scott, F.S. et al (1970). English Grammar: A Lingustic Study of its Classes and Structures. London: Heineman.

* Searle, J.R. (1969). Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. London: Cambridge University Press.

* Shulman, Lee S. (1987). Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform. Harvard Educational Review, Vol.17, No.1.

* Skinner, B.F. (1957). Verbal Behavior. New York: Appleton Century Crofts.

* Stern, H.H. (1983). Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching. London: Oxford University Press.

* Swan, Michael (1985). A Critical Look at the Communicative Approach, ELTJ, XXXIX, 1: 2-12: 76-87.

* Sweet, H. (1899). The Practical Study of Language. London: Dent Also Published by OUP, 1964.

* Van Els, Theo, et al. (1984). Applied Lingustics and the Learning and Teaching of Foreign Languages. London: Edward Arnold.

* Wells, R.S. (1947). Immediate Constituents. Language. 23: 81-117.

* Widdowson, H.G. (1973). Two Types of Communication Excercises, BAAL Seminar Papers, University of Lancaster.

* Widdowson, H.G. (1978). Teaching Language as Communication. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

* Wilkins, D.A. (1972). Lingustics in Language Teaching. London: Edward Arnold.

* Wilkins, D.A. (1972). An Investigation into the Lingustic and Situational Content of the Common Core in a Unit/Credit System. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publications.

* Wilkins, D.A. (1978). Notional Syllabuses. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

* Willis, Dave (1988). A Lexical Approach to Syllabus Design, EFL GAZETTE, August 1988.

* Yalden, Janice (1983). The Communicative Syllabus: Evolution, Design and Implementation. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

*****